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PRESS GUIDANCE ARA - January 23, 1979

Guyana: AID Foots the Bill

Q: Can you confirm that AID funds will be used to pay for the removal of bodies from Jonestown and enlighten us as to the rationale for that decision?

A: I can confirm for you that the Department of Defense will be reimbursed from AID funds for the costs of removing bodies from Guyana as well as for costs involved in the identification and release of bodies at the Dover Air Force Base Mortuary. Reimbursement will initially be made from the AID contingency fund which is budgeted for this year at $3 million. Remaining costs will be reprogrammed from the AID Economic Support Fund. Of course the identification and release activities are still going on at Dover so that the final amount of Defense Department costs are not yet known. It is now reported that the cost will be about $4.0 million. The Office of Management and Budget determined that since the Jonestown catastrophe was totally unexpected and since the major actions of the US Government were at the request of the Government of Guyana and were to assist that government in circumstances beyond its capacity to cope, the most appropriate available funds were those that I have mentioned.

Q: Are you saying then that the USG is paying the bills because the Government of Guyana asked us to?

A: On November 22 the Government of Guyana officially requested the United States to remove the bodies of American citizens at Jonestown and return them to the United States. Apparently, a basic consideration was the Government's fear that ~~the possible flood of next-of-kin wishing to~~ visit

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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the Jonestown burial site and asking for disinterment of bodies of relatives would overtax the Government's transportation and administrative facilities in that part of Guyana. Both our Government and the Government of Guyana were also concerned that facilities were unavailable in Jonestown to identify the dead before burial.

ARA/P:WJDieterich:mms Clearances:ARA/CAR:RMcCoy
ARA:JABushnell